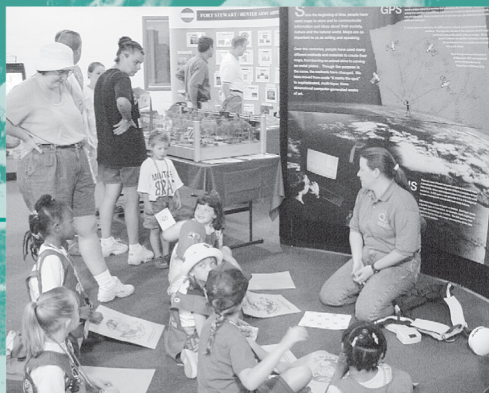
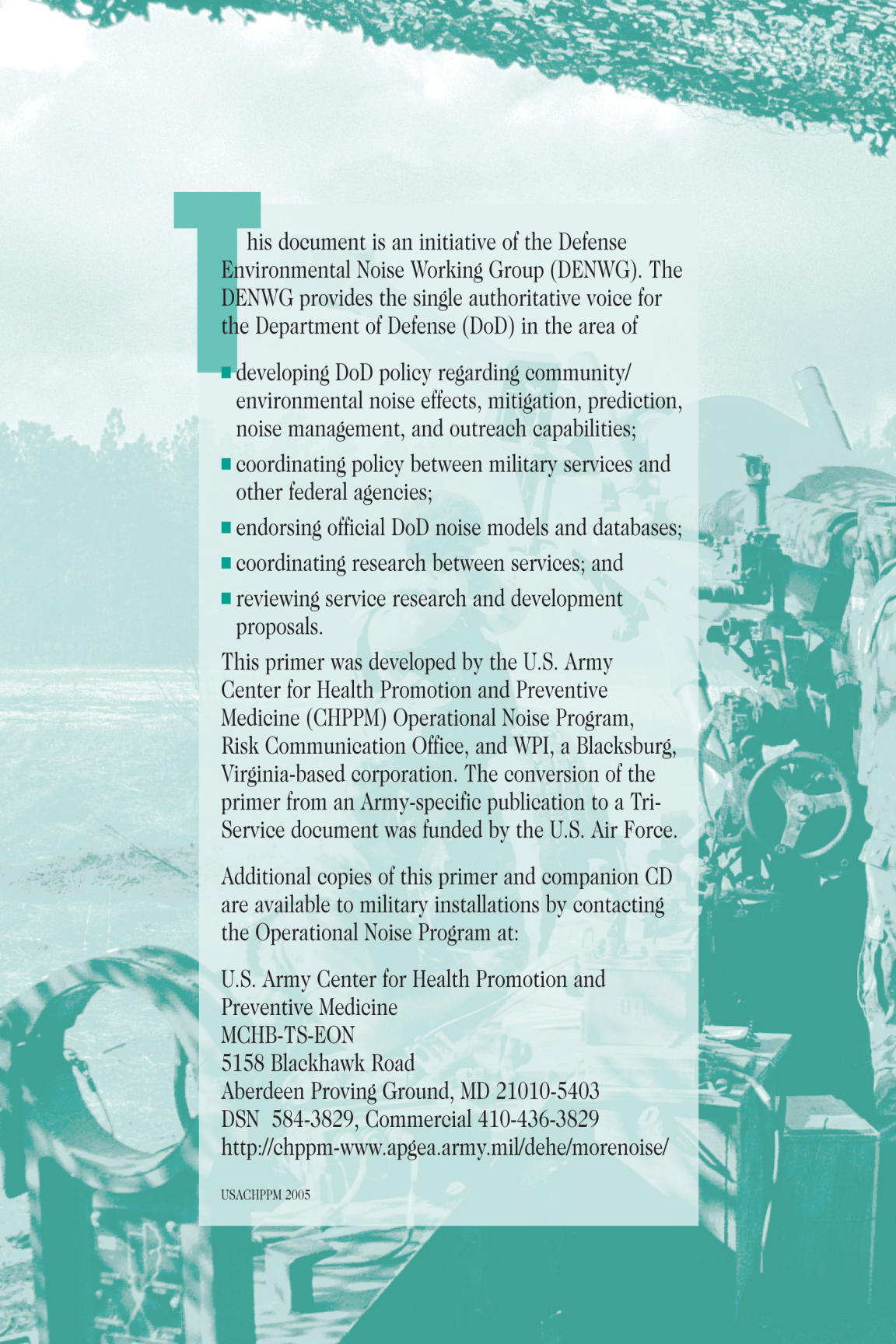




Tri-Services Community and Environmental Noise Primer

A Primer on
Facilitating
Community
Involvement
and
Communication
with
the Public





This document is an initiative of the Defense Environmental Noise Working Group (DENWG). The DENWG provides the single authoritative voice for the Department of Defense (DoD) in the area of

- developing DoD policy regarding community/environmental noise effects, mitigation, prediction, noise management, and outreach capabilities;
- coordinating policy between military services and other federal agencies;
- endorsing official DoD noise models and databases;
- coordinating research between services; and
- reviewing service research and development proposals.

This primer was developed by the U.S. Army Center for Health Promotion and Preventive Medicine (CHPPM) Operational Noise Program, Risk Communication Office, and WPI, a Blacksburg, Virginia-based corporation. The conversion of the primer from an Army-specific publication to a Tri-Service document was funded by the U.S. Air Force.

Additional copies of this primer and companion CD are available to military installations by contacting the Operational Noise Program at:

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Foreword

Tri-Services Community Noise Primer— A Primer on Facilitating Community Involvement and Communicating with the Public

This primer provides an introduction to applying community involvement and communication principles to address military noise-related issues. Following the suggestions in this primer will help your installation, base, or air station foster positive relationships with its neighbors.

The entire primer is available electronically on the companion CD, along with supplementary information, ready-to-use fact sheets, success stories, and direct Internet links to useful Web sites and electronic resources.

These tools are intended for all military and civilian personnel who may need to communicate with the public about any noise-related matter, such as a commander, master planner, or public affairs staff. It will also be useful to those who are likely to have noise management responsibilities. Installation personnel involved in noise management vary from installation to installation, but may include range control, environmental management, the Staff Judge Advocate's office, AICUZ program manager, and airfield management. Many other installation personnel will also benefit from a better understanding of environmental noise and its impacts on neighboring communities and military operations.

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Noise issues— the Department of Defense and its neighbors

As population growth and urbanization result in civilian communities situated closer to military installations and training areas, many once-remote military installations (Army posts, Naval and Air Force Bases/Air Stations) are sharing the air, land, sea, and communication spectrum previously dedicated to military activities. While this situation poses a variety of potential issues for the military, noise is one of the most problematic for civilians, as it can interfere with daily activities. Planes, helicopters, artillery, tanks, and small arms are standard equipment for the military, but they can be noisy. Loud sounds generated during training often reach neighboring communities—sometimes rattling windows, disturbing sleep, and affecting people’s lives in annoying ways. Growth in neighboring communities is just part of the picture. Other factors can also contribute to the increasing number of noise problems:

- Realignment of military units can increase the number of military activities on installations and active ranges.
- Use of new tactics and more powerful weapons can increase the amount of noise generated by military activities.
- Use of night-vision devices can increase night operations.

Community involvement is a powerful tool for identifying and addressing issues related to military-generated noise and its impact on surrounding communities. Advance planning and research will help you understand these issues and address them by applying the techniques and strategies described in this primer. The first part of this process is to understand, in general terms, some of the different perspectives related to noise issues.

The military services' perspective

To prepare soldiers, sailors, marines, and airmen for combat, the military services need to conduct high-quality training throughout the year. Military success is achieved through realistic training that produces skilled servicemen who have confidence in themselves, each other, and their weapons and equipment. Negative community reactions to noise are often seen by the services as threats to this essential training.

Public and political pressure, legal action, and damage claims against military installations have had significant consequences for military operations. For example, 43 percent of Army installations surveyed reported noise problems that required either rescheduling training or moving training ranges to solve the problem. (Army Environmental Policy Institute, 1995)

Unresolved noise problems invite a variety of restrictions on military activities, including

- reduction in available flight/training hours (e.g., limited or no night training, seasonal delays for training, modification of military training routes),
- higher altitudes for flight operations, and
- relocation or closing of firing points.

The result can be less effective, less realistic training.



Encroachment on DoD ranges and training areas is a serious and growing challenge to the readiness of U.S. Armed Forces. The Department of Defense needs a comprehensive and coordinated approach to addressing the encroachment issues. The approach must include an outreach strategy to increase public awareness of how essential realistic and effective training is to the readiness of the U.S. Armed Forces.

Senior Readiness Oversight Council, November 2000



The community perspective

“Noise” is unwanted sound. In a world of constant natural and manmade sounds, those perceived as noise vary among people in the community. The pivotal issue is the perceived impact or degree of annoyance or interference with activities from noise. To some, loud military sound is “the sound of freedom”; others feel military noise deprives them of privacy and quiet. People can be startled by unexpected sounds and usually don’t understand why such noise is necessary. For example, they often question the need for night training or any live fire training at all.

Recent studies suggest a growing intolerance among citizens and communities for noise encroachment associated with military activities, which has a variety of impacts, including

- interruptions at work and school,
- diminished privacy and quiet at home,
- interrupted entertainment and conversation,
- interrupted sleep,
- property damage like broken windows, and
- injury to wildlife, livestock, and pets.

The terms “community” and “public” are used broadly to characterize anyone who has an interest in or is impacted by environmental noise, including federal and state agency representatives. The term “community involvement,” as used in this primer, is interchangeable with the term public involvement.



“

At approximately 10:00 p.m., I heard an extremely loud sound approaching our senior community. It was so loud that my home shook as though an earthquake were happening. I knew it wasn’t an earthquake when I heard the rattling of a helicopter. Then at 3:00 a.m. another helicopter came through. I am a light sleeper and was awakened by the noise.

Concerned citizen

”

Finding common ground

Opportunities for cooperative, mutually beneficial solutions exist to help military installations and their neighboring communities address noise-related issues of concern. The Department of Defense's Community and Environmental Noise Program is specifically designed to help installations work with their civilian neighbors to control the impacts of environmental noise. This program can help guide noise management efforts both on and off an installation, often with minimal effort and no adverse effects on military training or increased expenses. It also can help protect an installation's mission by avoiding reduction or degradation of training due to complaints or litigation.

Cooperative problem solving can improve the likelihood that noise management solutions will actually be implemented. The military services have land use compatibility programs, such as the Air Installation Compatible Use Zone (AICUZ) program, Operational Noise Plan (ONMP), and Office of the Secretary of Defense's Joint Land Use Study (JLUS) Program. (For more information on these and other military noise-related programs, see the companion CD.) These programs help installations provide information, recommendations, and assistance to communities as they develop and implement land use controls, such as zoning, special permits and projects, health codes, subdivision regulations, capital improvement programs, building



codes, disclosure of noise levels, establishment of easements, and public acquisition of land. Such initiatives can help to prevent incompatible development around an installation, avoiding situations such as residential development in high noise zones near our boundaries.

Noise management decisions also can be formalized in a memorandum of agreement (MOA) between an installation and the community. Such agreements can formally demonstrate the installation's commitment to the community. See the companion CD for a sample MOA.



The Joint Land Use Study (JLUS) Program is a joint planning program funded in part by DoD's Office of Economic Adjustment and available to military installations and nearby communities. The purpose of a JLUS is to develop a land use plan that will avoid conflicts between mission objectives



and community growth patterns. The plan's implementation measures can include amending building codes to require added sound attenuation, land exchanges, fair disclosure of noise levels to property buyers, and traditional development controls like zoning, subdivision regulations, and other measures. An important ingredient to a successful JLUS is community consensus. Each local governing body within the proposed JLUS area must agree with the need for compatible growth around the military installation. Experience from these studies show a high success rate and mutual benefits to the installation and the surrounding communities.

A private home was built within an off-post known Zone III* from an Army training range. Local government had assured the installation that development would not be approved within high-noise areas, yet they granted a site variance to the owner to build the home on agricultural-zoned land. The result was that the firing point had to be moved. This would not have been necessary if there was

an established process that allowed the installation to review all requests for permits or variances in high noise zones or if an MOA had been in effect to documenting the local government's commitment of no development in high noise areas.

**Areas where noise levels can exceed 75 decibels (A-weighted) or 70 decibels (C-weighted) from low-frequency sound, such as from artillery or explosions. For more details on noise measurements, see the "How does the military assess noise and its impacts?" fact sheet on the companion CD. -*

Improving noise management through community involvement

Community involvement activities range in complexity depending on the severity of noise impacts. Generally “informing” the public is helpful in situations that are not contentious. However, the greater the noise problem, the more the military installations should be considering the community as an equal partner in addressing noise-related issues.

An effective community involvement program

- builds trust and enhances relationships,
- strengthens credibility,
- educates and informs,
- increases the likelihood of public acceptance,
- reduces costly delays and relocations,
- helps avoid hearings or litigation, and
- leads to better outcomes.

Decisions regarding noise should be made as a means of preventing or addressing noise problems, not as a reaction to complaints. Similarly, these decisions should not be made in a vacuum. Stakeholders can be invited to participate by providing input into the decision-making process. To invite participation, it may not be necessary to have a comprehensive public hearing process. For example, simply including community representatives in a brainstorming meeting can create goodwill and solicit input. Poster

Marine Corps Community Involvement Strategy

The Marine Corps has had success in taking a proactive approach to community involvement. The service established Community Plans and Liaison Offices (CPLOs) to provide installation commanders a direct and immediate interface with local communities. The CPLO staff work directly for commanding officers and serve in the following roles:



- Build and maintain community relationships
- Monitor and guard against encroachment
- Articulate the role of training areas in the military mission
- Keep the installation as a local and regional partner
- Engage in legislative processes

displays at an open forum public meeting also can provide stakeholders an opportunity to review and provide input on different options. After decisions have been made, installations need to communicate these decisions to the public and show how the installation is working to reduce its noise impacts. Be careful, however, not to make irreversible decisions or statements.

Ineffective community involvement

Where installations do not have a community involvement strategy that addresses noise issues, neighboring communities may not know how and why military activities generate noise or what efforts are undertaken to mitigate its effects. Civilians might see the installation's recommendations for noise management as having a one-sided, authoritarian perspective. The "Decide, Announce, and Defend" approach is not effective community involvement.



An effective community involvement program demonstrates that your installation makes responsible decisions and has a commitment to preserving public trust. Ideally, community involvement is proactive, but it also can help to regain public trust and acceptance when and where noise problems already exist. With the support of the installation commander and integrated installation support, community involvement activities can be implemented that will encourage community input and help mitigate the effects of military noise on the community.

Take the time to do it right

While there is no magic formula for effective community involvement, leadership and the support of the installation commander will assist your efforts. In addition, many installations will already have a documented community involvement strategy. The installation's Public Affairs Officer (PAO) and community involvement staff should be your strategic partners in noise-related community involvement efforts. They will help integrate and coordinate your efforts with the installation's overall community involvement and



Procedures, rather than actual decisions, are the origin of most people's perception of political legitimacy."

Public Planning and Control of Urban Land Development



communication efforts; for example, the PAO can incorporate your information into fact sheets; tours/briefings; meetings with elected officials; and public notifications of training events.

Provide involvement opportunities early...

Time and money spent on proactive community involvement activities early in a noise program will save time and money later.

...and often

Communication with the local community is not a single event. It is a continual process.

The specific techniques used for noise-related community involvement will depend upon the degree of controversy surrounding noise issues at the installation and the characteristics of the local political institutions. But the process should always be thought through and designed in an orderly and systematic manner. Your installation may want to develop a noise management community involvement plan that specifies the community involvement techniques and strategies best suited to address noise-related issues and is integrated with its overall community involvement strategy.

Developing a Communication Strategy

While there are differences between the services approach to noise management the steps to involve and communicate with the public are based upon the same principles. Part of your community involvement plans to involve and inform the public about noise issues should include the development of a communication strategy. **The goal of a communication strategy is not to reach unanimity but to increase the understanding and involvement of interested parties in the process.** Anyone involved in communicating with the public should understand the relevant communication principles to establish trust and credibility with the public and ensure effective communication efforts. *Note: You must coordinate with other installation stakeholders, such as public affairs and operations, and community involvement staff if it exists, when planning your community involvement and communication strategies.*



Understanding your stakeholders

The foundation of effective community involvement and communication is a working understanding of the people and the issues. The PAO will be able to provide you with information on installation stakeholders and the greater community. You will want to determine those stakeholders that are specifically concerned with noise issues. A good way to start identifying these stakeholders is to ask questions like these:

- Who is most likely to be affected by the noise problem or issue?
- Who is concerned?
- What do they care about and why?
- Whom do I need to involve and keep informed?
- What are the noise issues affecting these stakeholders?
- What are the hot topics that I need to address?
- How can I anticipate and effectively respond to issues?

Your list of stakeholders will likely include local government representatives, such as a city planner, and community representatives, such as residents from communities adjacent to the installation. Internally, your installation's range control may ultimately coordinate noise complaints and press releases in advance of loud training events. Ensure that all military personnel have a way to provide input concerning the noise management program so they can express concerns about the effects on training and on their quality of life since on-base housing and even day-care facilities can be impacted by military noise. Review the identity of all the involved "publics" carefully before initiating a program of action, and then reassess target stakeholders at each stage of the program. (See the fact sheet titled "Identifying Stakeholders" on the companion CD.)



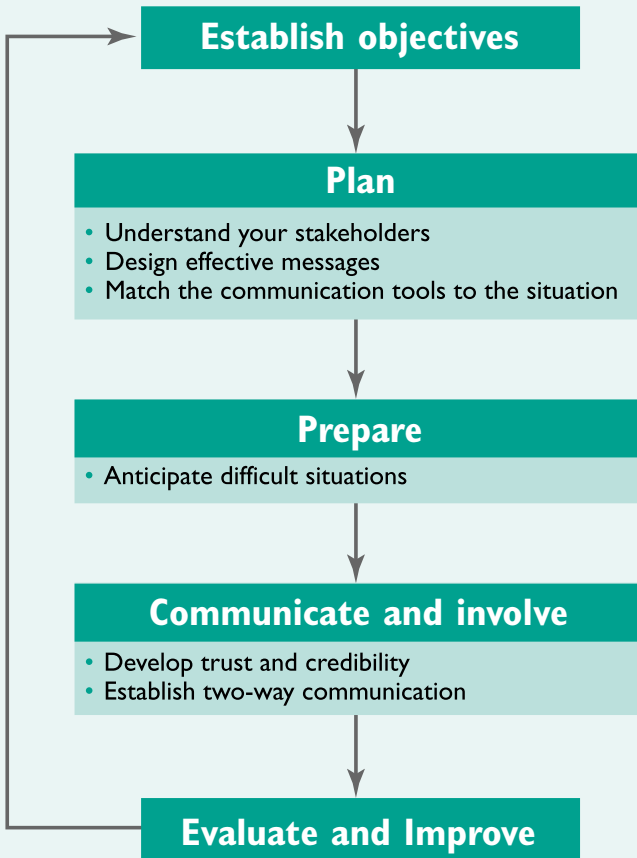
Depending on time and resources available, there are different methods for gathering information about your stakeholders' noise-related concerns. Use the Internet and interviews, if possible, to research the background of your stakeholders to identify

- demographics;
- ethnic background;
- languages and the need for translators;
- sensitive populations, such as elderly people, night-shift workers, and children;
- media contacts;
- popular activities and gathering places;
- accessible resources such as computers, e-mail, and fax machines; and
- the history of the installation.

The U.S. Census Bureau (www.census.gov) is a good source for information such as racial diversity, income, educational attainment, and employment. Newspapers are another source of information. The interests and concerns of the community are reflected in local media coverage and letters to the editors. Both national and local newspapers are usually available via the Internet.



Using effective communication principles



Risk communication courses are available to help you develop your communication skills and strategies. U.S. Army Center for Health Promotion and Preventive Medicine (CHPPM) Health Risk Communication program and the Navy's Civil Engineer Corps Officers School (CECOS) offer similar classes on risk communication. More information on these courses is available on the Internet; see the CHPPM (<http://chppm-www.apgea.army.mil/risk>) and CECOS (<https://www.cecocos.navy.mil>) Web sites for more information.

Designing effective messages

When preparing for a meeting with stakeholders or designing communication materials, determine your communication objective. Then write three or four key messages to accomplish your objective. Using more than just a few messages will weaken the overall thrust of your communication and may overwhelm the audience. The messages you write should be brief, accurate, straightforward, easy to understand, and consistent. Your messages should highlight the effort to control noise and be backed by two to four supporting facts stated in lay language and, if possible, responding to stakeholder concerns you have heard.

As you construct your messages, keep the following principles in mind:

- Be proactive! Make knowing your community a priority. An ongoing and continuing dialogue between your facility and the public goes a long way in preventing communication crises.
- Obtain internal agreement on the message. Be aware of what others within the military are saying about an issue, and realize that everyone has a part to play in reaching consensus on messages.
- Tailor the language to the audience. Consider reading level, language barriers, concerns about the issue, and science understanding.
- Use simple and clear language. Avoid acronyms, jargon, and shortcut explanations that typically may be used within the military.
- Avoid language that conveys to the audience they have no control. If a decision regarding a planned action hasn't been made, keep verbs conditional.

Even if your activities are not controversial, let the public know. Inform them, for example, when training is rescheduled to reduce noise impacts.

Matching communication tools to the situation

Various outreach and communication activities should be conducted to involve and educate the public. Involving the public through the noise management program lets all stakeholders express their views and will provide you with information that can be used to help plan training activities in such a way as to minimize conflict.

Which communication tools you choose to use will depend upon your available resources, the amount of anticipated controversy, and the stakeholders' preferred methods of receiving information. A variety of options are available, including:

- fact sheets
- exhibit boards/displays

- tours
- brochures
- annual reports
- open houses
- Web sites
- meetings (large, small, one-on-one)

More information on these communication tools is available on the companion CD.

Anticipating potentially difficult situations

Before meeting with stakeholders, take the time to prepare. For example, before a public meeting, you should anticipate what questions community members may ask. By studying your audience ahead of time, you can probably identify most of these potential questions. Plan your responses to general questions, as well as to specific inquiries. You may want to use colleagues to simulate challenging situations ahead of time.

Developing trust and credibility

When you take the time to listen to people and try to understand their perspective, you build credibility and trust. This is important with any interaction you may have with your stakeholders.

- Be open and honest-Communicate early and often. You must be willing to admit mistakes, deliver bad news, and share information.
- Start by encouraging questions in any areas where there may be concerns or interest. Sometimes people need to be encouraged to speak out.
- Coordinate and collaborate with other credible sources-Build alliances with credible third parties to raise your credibility. These third parties should have credibility equal to or better than yours. Examples of third parties are town officials, members of local environmental groups, and members of neighborhood associations.
- Be organized and prepared-Make sure you have planned carefully and are ready before interacting with stakeholders. They will easily sense when you are “winging” it, which will only diminish their trust in you.
- Use language, terms, and concepts that make sense to your stakeholders, whether or not you are more comfortable using technical jargon. Stakeholders can interpret highly technical presentations as an attempt to obscure meaning. You may want to use graphics, such as ones showing noise contours, that are easy to understand.

- Acknowledge that you have heard what stakeholders are saying, whether or not you agree with it.
- Ask for input from stakeholders on what communication processes or techniques they prefer, and use those as much as possible. Use techniques that are accepted as fair by all parties.
- Follow through on commitments-Deliver what you promise. If you say you'll get back to someone with an answer, do it.

If you lose trust and credibility, either through your own actions or as a result of outside events, there are ways you can regain them. In addition to employing all the ways to build credibility, you also can

- acknowledge past mistakes,
- take responsibility for actions and inactions,
- apologize if appropriate, and
- show evidence of past performance and future commitment.

Establishing two-way communication

To build a foundation of trust with the public, communicators must be empathetic with the public's opinions, viewpoints, and concerns. Treat them with genuine courtesy, patience, honesty, and fairness. Ongoing interactions with the public are crucial. Even if stakeholders don't seem to be concerned, it is important to continue to repeat your message in as many formats and venues as possible. Their input may help you determine how military activities that may have noise impacts can be planned to cause the least amount of disturbance and still achieve your objectives.



There is more than one way to meet stakeholder needs. Community involvement is not a one-time occurrence; it is an ongoing part of public policy. Resources available for communication vary over time and from issue to issue. Think of innovative ways to interact with stakeholders so you'll never be in a position of having to say "no" without providing an alternative.

Communication is not about everyone coming to agreement. Your stakeholders may not agree with your position, but they will respect you for having listened to their concerns.



Evaluating your efforts

Doing your homework continues even after you have planned your communication approach and begun implementing the program. You need to actively gather feedback throughout the process on the needs of your stakeholders and how well you are meeting them. No matter how you decide to evaluate and measure your communication effort, it's important to remember not to wait until the end. Community involvement activities must be selected and tailored to the situation, the community, and the job. Analyze each situation to determine the tools and expertise needed to develop and maintain lasting agreements. Consider your goals and whether progress is being made. If the chosen community involvement techniques do not work in your situation, try to determine why and what other techniques might work better.



How to get the best out of your public meetings

- Advertise the meeting time and location in places your stakeholders will see. For example, posting an announcement for a public meeting on a Web site may be inadequate if the majority of stakeholders look in the local newspaper for that kind of information. Find out by asking stakeholders where they prefer to get information (local paper, radio, TV, Web site, other?), what meeting locations are convenient for them (a local community building, a church, a government office?), and what times and days of the week are best. Be willing to accommodate their needs if you ask about them.
- Be clear about how stakeholder input will impact your actions. Invite input, set realistic expectations, and then be as specific as possible about how the public influenced the decision-making process.
- Establish a clear point of contact—Designate a point of contact so that stakeholders can share their concerns. Make sure this contact is available by phone and in person.
- Intergovernmental coordination—Communicate with other government agencies before a meeting so that there are no surprises in front of the public.
- Anticipate questions—By studying your audience ahead of time, you can identify most of the questions they will ask. Plan your responses to general questions, as well as to specific inquiries.
- Listen—As an issue emerges, stakeholder input is critical. Stakeholders can provide you with excellent ideas, and their input can help determine the best way to communicate with them. When someone else is speaking, listen to what is being asked, and pay attention to the reaction of the audience.
- Relax and be available at the end of a meeting—This is when many meaningful conversations take place. People see that you are willing to take the time to make certain everyone's questions are answered. It will probably feel uncomfortable at first, but one-on-one interactions are beneficial.
 - ▼ Ask people who didn't speak what their issues are.
Do they have any questions?
What did they think of the meeting?
 - ▼ Acknowledge the frustration of people who expressed high levels of concern.
Ask what other information you can provide.
 - ▼ Remember you work for these people—Be helpful, patient, and courteous.



Simple methods exist that will help you to evaluate your efforts:

- Read the newspaper-The extent and tone of press coverage can provide a great deal of feedback.
- Have a designated observer at a meeting provide you with specific feedback about what you said and how people responded.
- Ask stakeholders what they think.

Communication is not about everyone coming to agreement. Your stakeholders may not agree with your position, but they will respect you for having listened to their concerns.

Evaluation criteria to consider:

- Did the message reach the audience?
- Did the audience understand the message?
- Do you understand your target audience's perspectives of the issue?
- Has there been a change in media coverage, the types of questions asked, or the level of participation?

Integrating noise-related community involvement activities into your installation's day-to-day business

Continuous, effective communication and coordination with the local community is required to maintain a positive relationship between the installation and the community. Therefore, noise related decisions and changes in operations or equipment need to be shared with the community. There are a variety of ways to communicate information that can be integrated with your installation's ongoing activities.

Participation in regional planning meetings or establishing local installation-and-town advisory groups keeps the communication lines open. In addition, informal opportunities to interact with the public can also be identified.

Frequent dissemination of noise-related information will also help to maintain (or improve) relations with the public. Remember that noise management information should be coordinated with the PAO and integrated with his or her efforts.

Advance notification of significant noise events is one kind of information that should be communicated regularly to the public. Experience has shown that advance warning of activities that might cause annoyance seems to lessen, rather than increase annoyance. There is a saying that "good public relations is worth 15 decibels."

Beyond public meetings—Informal ways to interact

Besides public meetings, informal opportunities are also available to build relationships with stakeholders and establish credibility. Start small and work on building relationships one person or group at a time.

- Attend nonmilitary community meetings (Kiwanis, Junior League, etc.) where you can be open to public questions and foster one-on-one conversations.
- Meet with the editorial boards of local newspapers, including critical ones.
- Telephone local officials; let them know who you are and that you are available if they have any questions about the facility.
- Seek out respected individuals or groups in the community who are interested in the process.
- Provide contact information and encourage the public to follow up with you. Set up an e-mail list to consistently communicate to many stakeholders simultaneously.



Coordination and communication within an installation and with adjoining installations is also important. For example, if an artillery unit commences training without following proper procedures, much of the trust built through community involvement activities can be quickly eroded. Similarly, interservice cooperation between adjoining installations helps to develop a better noise management program because the public cannot discriminate among different noise sources.

At Camp Ripley, Minnesota, the installation commander schedules time with a local radio station to talk about upcoming training activities and to thank the community for its support. Training and other information is also printed in a local newspaper that has a semiregular column called the “Ripley Corner.” (See Camp Ripley’s success story on the companion CD.)



At Fort Bragg, North Carolina, internal noise management is coordinated so well that training units call range control before training events. They ask, for example, about weather conditions (which can affect how noise travels) and how much explosives they should use. (See Fort Bragg’s success story on the companion CD.)

By design, community noise management program components, community involvement activities, and complaint management should be integrated into an installation's plans and planning programs (e.g., training, land management, and master planning) that support installation operations. Noise should be considered in all installation planning activities, such as the siting of new facilities and ranges. When necessary, units should be required to address noise problems in standard operating procedures.

“

The only thing harder than getting a new idea into the military mind, is getting an old one out.

Sir B.H. Liddell Hart

”



Complaint management

Communication with people who call to complain about noise requires certain skills and techniques. The goal of a complaint management program is to handle neighbors' complaints in ways that will prevent further irritation. Inappropriate complaint management procedures or insensitive communication can increase a caller's annoyance. It is in the interest of the services to eliminate procedural and relationship dissatisfaction and, by doing so, lessen the chance of complaints escalating into political conflict.

When people call to complain

Complaints typically are made only by a small percentage of the people who are bothered by noise in their communities. People who call to complain are often angry because they feel that the negative impact on their lives has been too large. Remember, individuals may respond to the same sound in quite different ways, and their perception is their reality.

Handling noise complaints is mainly reactive and can involve high-stress communication. If proactive community involvement did not prevent the caller

Publicizing a specific office or single point of contact to handle noise complaints and answer questions can improve community relations.



from becoming excessively annoyed, the installation-community relationship requires repair. This is often possible by replying to complaints with an explanation of what training is responsible for the noise, why such training is necessary, how often it is scheduled, and how long the training will go on.

Effective complaint management communication is challenging. Here are some suggested tips for dealing with difficult callers:

- Understand the goal of complaint management and the limits of what you can do.
- Be courteous and honest.
- Demonstrate integrity and sensitivity to build trust.
- Let the caller know that a detailed log of complaints is kept and regularly reported to the command group; this lets the caller know that complaints are taken seriously.
- When appropriate, say, "Every effort will be made to correct the problem, mission permitting."

- Never selectively release information.
- Never lie or stretch the truth.
- Maintain current fact sheets and questions/answers to send to complainants.
- Investigate without delay.
- Do not make promises you cannot keep.
- Make a commitment to the caller to follow up (e.g., call back with more information) whenever necessary.

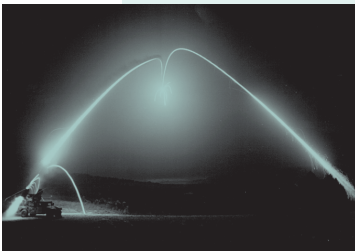
Leadership is the key....the installation commander needs to be aware of the noise complaints and their impact on the community for real action to occur.



As with other noise management outreach, you should be careful not to sound defensive. As an installation representative, your response is considered installation policy.

The proper handling of noise complaints can be used to educate the complainant about the importance of the installation's mission. A detailed complaint log can provide useful information about noise impacts and help to plan future mitigation activities. In addition, such records should be kept for quality assurance purposes.

“While I was working for Public Affairs Office of a major command, many of our subordinate installations received ongoing complaints about helicopter noise. The challenge was that in the urban environment in which we were located, we were often blamed for disturbances caused by commercial helicopters and/or helicopters belonging to other services. We got nowhere by simply denying the noise was from our aircraft. It was a challenge to get



my bosses to deal with the issue, because they saw it as taking responsibility for a problem they did not create, but once we worked with the community to help them on this issue, we finally got some relief from the complaints and built some good relationships. The solution: the CG sent letters to all of his military counterparts in the region informing them that he had reinstructed all of his pilots on the appropriate routes-which were some distance

from residential housing-and that he expected them to do the same. We forwarded that letter to the local condo association that had complained. It didn't stop all of our calls, but they went down significantly after that.”

Publicizing the complaint management program

To serve the community and accomplish the military's goals, a complaint management system must be visible and accessible. There are many ways to publicize the system, including

- posters and signs in community areas,
- contract forms,
- advertising-your installation's complaint program could be the theme of an advertising campaign, and
- Web sites.

When advertising your complaint management program, include advice and a schedule of upcoming training events. Information about your installation's mission could also be included, along with information about upcoming community involvement activities.

Similarly, the potential for noise complaints can be reduced by providing the news media with press releases when "other than normal" operations are scheduled or when normal operations resume after a period of inactivity. The press release should include the complaint line telephone number and details about the planned activity, including type and reason for noise, timing, and efforts being made to reduce the noise.

At Fort A.P. Hill, Virginia, an extensive education and outreach effort included publicity regarding the nature of noise generated by the installation and ongoing efforts to apply science and common sense to minimize disruptions. During these efforts, the need for citizens to report disturbing noise generated by military activities was emphasized. As a result of these efforts, the local citizens themselves proposed changing the name of the notification system from "Noise Complaint" to "Noise Report." (See Fort A.P. Hill's success story on the companion CD.)



Companion CD contents

Use the tools and resources on the companion CD to educate and engage stakeholders on and off the installation and to generate support for your installation's noise management activities.

Fact sheets—Ready-to-use tools to give to stakeholders:

Fact sheets for installation and community stakeholders:

- How does the military assess noise and its impacts?
- What about vibration?
- How is noise mitigated?
- What are Accident Potential Zones?
- Formalizing agreements with the community
- How is noise modeled?
- Joint Land Use Study Program Guidance Manual

Additional fact sheets for community stakeholders:

- How does the military impact the local economy?
- Frequently asked questions
- A developer's checklist
- What to know when buying a house
- Using real estate disclosure to manage environmental noise

Checklists—Tools to help plan community involvement activities:

- Creating fact sheets
- Planning a public meeting
- Preparing for presentations
- Effectively handling complaints
- Community involvement toolbox
- Public participation spectrum
- Identifying stakeholders
- Creating a Web site
- Integrating your installation's community involvement efforts

Internet links—Browse military Web sites

Whom to call—Contact Department of Defense noise experts

Training—Discover educational opportunities


Success Stories—Read about military installations where noise management has been a success

Conclusion

There is no way around it—although installation activities may be sited to lessen future noise impacts and limited constraints may be placed on night operations, running a military installation is a noisy business. However, you can do something about the effect of noise on the affected communities. Working with the installation support staff, develop strategies for noise-related community involvement efforts. Then do the following:

- identify those issues and concerns that need to be addressed;
- ask for stakeholder input as part of your decision-making processes;
- communicate early and often with your stakeholders;
- employ risk communication strategies for interacting with your stakeholders;
- develop and implement a complaint management system.





This primer is a Tri-Service collaborative effort with the purpose of providing information on noise management at installations, bases and stations when dealing with surrounding communities. The companion CD provides insight into how other installations have successfully managed noise and used community involvement to continue their mission. It also provides a variety of tools and helpful fact sheets that you may use when working with your community on noise management.

This primer is resource information supporting the Military Services under the auspices of the Department of Defense Environmental Noise Working Group (DENWG).

For more information on the Air Force's noise management, contact:

AICUZ/Noise Program Manager
Bases and Units Branch
HQ USAF/ILEPB
1260 Air Force Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 20330
(703) 604-5277

For more information on the Army's noise management, contact:

Operational Noise Program
U.S. Center for Health Promotion and Preventive Medicine
MCHB-TS-EON
Aberdeen Proving Ground, MD 21010-5403
(410) 436-3829

For more information on the Marine Corp's noise management, contact:

AICUZ Program Manager
Headquarter Marine Corps
Washington DC, 20380-1775
(703) 695-8240, ext 3350

For more information on the Navy's noise management, contact:

Special Assistant for AICUZ and Encroachment
Commander Navy Installations
Naval Facilities Engineering Command
Washington Navy Yard
Washington DC 20374
(202) 685-9181

Additional copies of this primer and companion CD are available to military installations, bases and stations by contacting the Operational Noise Program by using the Army contact information listed above or use the link: <http://chppm-www.apgea.army.mil/dehe/morenoise/>

